

February 19, 2016

Appropriations Committee

House Bill 5044: An act making adjustments to state expenditures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Stephanie Molden and I am a State Employee with the Department of Transportation. The State of Connecticut has many avenues by which to reduce the budget deficit. Unfortunately, some folks are looking to rely on short term fixes that will damage our economy in the long run. Cutting pay and benefits for state employees may reduce expenditures for now, but residents who have reduced income and security will not be able to drive the economic growth necessary to keep the State solvent and thriving in the future. The Legislature should consider reaching out to State employees for suggestions on how to reduce expenditures or increase revenue, as these are the people with the knowledge and expertise of everyday operations.

For example, Connecticut maintains laws and regulations regarding the size and weights of vehicles and vehicle loads travelling on its roadway network, and levies permit fees on OS/OW vehicles travelling through the State. These fees help to pay for the engineering services to route trucks and for the damage that overly large vehicles do to our roads and bridges. But the last time these statutes were amended was 1985.

Connecticut State Statute (Section 14-270) mandates that oversize/overweight permits cost a total of \$26 per vehicle. In 2016 dollars, the permit fee should be at least \$57 dollars per vehicle just to keep up with inflation. New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts all charge between \$40 and \$1,000 for single permits. Updating our State Statutes to bring them into alignment with inflation and regional policies is an easy task that could bring in more revenue without raising general taxes.

Last year, CTDOT issued over 91,000 permits for oversize and overweight loads and vehicles. Last year's revenue was \$2,674,523. If CT were to increase OS/OW permit fees just enough to account for inflation, we could take in \$5,200,000, essentially doubling the State's revenue from this fee.

This is just one of many potential ways to raise revenue without raising general taxes. In order to protect its economy for the future, Connecticut needs to ensure the well-being of its middle class tax payers. Layoffs and cuts to state employees will decrease the ability of Departments to meet the objectives, erode economic security for the middle class, and decrease the overall quality of living in the great state of Connecticut.

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